

# The Cantor/Adams VAWA Bill Eliminates Existing Protections for Battered Women

May 14, 2012

Dear Colleague:

Last month the Senate passed a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and strengthen its protections. Rather than take up the bipartisan Senate bill, House Republicans introduced a partisan bill, H.R. 4970, that eviscerates protections for women. Although Republicans are pushing the message that the bill is a straight VAWA reauthorization, that is not accurate. The bill not only omits provisions to protect certain vulnerable groups, it actually **ROLLS BACK longstanding, bipartisan protections** for victims of domestic and sexual violence and **REPEALS critical law enforcement tools** needed for the prosecution of offenders.

The truth is that the Cantor/Adams bill does violence to VAWA, and that is why it has been met with strenuous objection from leading women's rights groups, law enforcement organizations, victim advocacy groups, and service providers. Hundreds of organizations have written letters in opposition to the bill, including:

National Organization for Women;

National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women;

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs;

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence;

National Network to End Domestic Violence; and

Break the Cycle.

We urge members to oppose the dangerous Cantor/Adams bill and support legislation that reauthorizes VAWA and makes the necessary changes that will help reduce domestic violence in America. Such provisions are included in the bipartisan Senate bill, S. 1925, as well as H.R. 4271, introduced by Rep. Gwen Moore.

## **The Cantor/Adams Bill Rolls Back Existing Protections for Women**

- The bill reverses confidentiality provisions that have existed since 1996 to protect immigrant women seeking protection from further violence. Instead of safeguarding women from retaliation, the bill would now have government agents contact abusers whose battered wives are seeking protection, tipping them off to the fact that their wives are taking steps to leave.
- The bill erects unnecessary barriers to the U visa process, which allows law enforcement to gain the cooperation of immigrant victims of crimes in order to get dangerous criminals off of our streets. Law enforcement opposes the new restrictions created in this bill, because the bill will weaken a critical tool needed to fight crime. Law enforcement wants to expand the U visa, not restrict it.
- The bill repeals a provision from VAWA 2000 that allows victims with temporary U visas to get permanent protection through green cards if they fully cooperate with law enforcement. Eliminating this opportunity will result in fewer victims seeking protection, less cooperation, fewer prosecutions, and more criminal conduct that endangers women and public safety.

## **The Cantor/Adams Bill Omits Protections for Particularly Vulnerable Women**

- **Native American Women.** The bill strips the key provisions in the bipartisan Senate bill designed to protect and provide justice to Native American victims. These provisions are the result of years of inter-governmental consultations between the U.S. Department of Justice and tribal leaders, in coordination with federal prosecutors, FBI agents, tribal justice personnel, victim advocates, and other key stakeholders. **These provisions are critical to the safety of Native American women.**
- **LGBTQ and Culturally Specific victims.** The bill omits clarifying language included in the bipartisan Senate bill that would assist service providers in supporting victims who have had difficulty accessing traditional services because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or cultural differences.

## **Select Quotes from Leading Domestic Violence Organizations**

[NTF] expresses its strong opposition to the Cantor-Adams version of the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. . . . It **weakens or deletes entirely some of the vital improvements in the Senate bill**, including the strong provisions that are designed to increase the safety of Native women and the needs of the LGBT community. The bill also **contains damaging provisions that create obstacles for immigrant victims seeking to report crimes, increase danger for immigrant victims by eliminating important confidentiality**

**protections, undermine effective anti-fraud protections, and roll back years of progress to protect the safety of immigrant victims.** That is not a bill that the Task Force, comprised of thousands of experts, law enforcement and advocates across the country, can support.

-- *The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women.*

H.R. 4970 **weakens vital improvements contained in the recently passed Senate VAWA bill (S. 1925),** including provisions designed to increase the safety of Native women and the needs of the LGBT community. In addition, H.R. 4970 **includes damaging provisions that roll back years of progress to protect the safety of immigrant victims.** Consequently, H.R. 4970 will create obstacles for immigrant victims seeking to report crimes, increase danger for immigrant victims by eliminating important confidentiality protections, and will undermine effective anti-fraud protections.

-- *The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.*

**H.R. 4970 is not the answer, and we urge you to oppose it.**

If interested in obtaining further information please contact House Judiciary Democratic Staff, Ron LeGrand ([ron.legrand@mail.house.gov](mailto:ron.legrand@mail.house.gov)) and Jenny Perrino ([jenny.perrino@mail.house.gov](mailto:jenny.perrino@mail.house.gov)), at 225-6906.

Sincerely,

s/ John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member

s/ Zoe Lofgren, Immigration Subcommittee Ranking Member

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